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The nature and offices of Pity and Courtesy:

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CONSIDER'D IN

TWO DISCOURSES

Preach'd before the

Univerfity of CAMBRIDGE.

BY

JOHN MAINWARING, B.D.

Fellow of St. JOHN'S College.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. WHISTON and B. WHITE,
in Fleet-street.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Lord *H R D E.*

My Lord,

THE world will not be surpris'd that the Author of these Discourses should be desirous of obtaining your Lordship's Patronage, when the Subject of them is consider'd. And he hopes your Lordship will not be displeas'd with his taking this first opportunity of publicly declaring the high regard, with which he has the honour to be

Your Lordship's most oblig'd,

And most obedient Servant.

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humour, or caprice of others; considering how much

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left out the great and common Parent of all would
have to make unchangeable his offspring, as to leave

I PETER iii. 8. last part.

be pitiful, be courteous.

NOtwithstanding the many clear and undoubted
marks of wisdom and goodness which are
found in all those parts of the creation, of
which we have any knowledge; it must
be confess'd, that the present world, from the very
settlement and condition of it, abounds with misery:
and that men, instead of prudently availing themselves
of those remedies which Nature has, in pity, provided
against the numberless evils to which they are ne-
cessarily expos'd; have, by their own mismanagement
and perverseness, added to them numberless others
which might be avoided. Considering also how many
causes and accidents must needs have arisen in the
course of the world, capable of destroying that natural
equality which seems to have been intended between
the several individuals of the same species; and conse-
quently,

quently, how few can be found among them, whose welfare is not more or less dependent on the will, or humour, or caprice of others: considering how much easier it is in general to injure or obstruct, than to improve or promote human happiness; — who can believe that the great and common Parent of all would have so little tenderness for his offspring, as to leave them in a world thus constituted, without some better defence and stronger security than that of Reason? If this faculty stood in need of as little culture and improvement, as the several appetites and instincts of our nature; or if, when most cultivated and improved, it were found to act as uniformly, and operate as invariably as they do; — to pursue and embrace the several truths presented to *it*, with the same readiness and certainty that they do the objects which are suited to *them*; — it would have some right to those sounding titles, which the zeal of its admirers have bestowed upon it. But 'twould be ill trusting to the rigid scrutinies of such a principle, as those who possess it in its greatest perfection, are often much more famous for the justness of their conclusions, than for the tenderness and delicacy of their perceptions. The causes of this may perhaps appear as we advance in our enquiries. At present it will be more pertinent to observe how admirably both the accidental and the necessary defects of Reason, are supplied by the active, uniform, instinctive principle of Pity. For by giving to all men this principle, and placing them in a state of mutual dependency,

God hath plainly constituted 'em the guardians and protectors of each other's welfare ; hath made their own natural feelings and conscious expectations, the rule and measure of their mutual dealings. This soft and tender affection is accordingly found so essential an ingredient in the composition of our Nature, that the absence or exclusion of it is term'd inhumanity; a word which carries with it the deepest disgrace and infamy. For it marks the opposition, the violence, and even outrage which nature suffers before it can take place. But if so, what can be the reason that the Poets and Orators and Divines of every age and country have employ'd all the powers of argument and eloquence, to awaken the tender affections, nay, to keep them alive ? The answer is, that the refined pleasures annexed to such an employment, is a sufficient reason for their chusing it ; and that all their art and labour might well have been spar'd, in any other view, had Nature been left to her own generous impulse, and virtuous emotions. But when once, under the notion of regulating and directing, men had learnt to over-rule and suppress them ; when, instead of leading the pure current into its proper channels, they had contriv'd to dry up the very source from whence it sprung ; — then it was that Interest under the mask of Reason, began to dispute the claims of the wretched ; and that one instance of ill-placed pity, was deem'd an excuse for a hundred acts of bare-fac'd cruelty. Interest, or passion may put men upon acts of this kind, and these acts by degrees may be

form'd into habits. And 'twere well if certain Nations, among the most civiliz'd, in other respects, were more sensible of this danger. The veriest savages can hardly equal them in the manner of punishing offenders against religion, or the state. Nor is it any excuse to say, that, for the safety of society, actions must be punish'd with a severity proportion'd to the guilt they carry; and that treason, joined with an intention or attempt to murder, is one of the most guilty that can be. For tho' all this be true, yet is any one so *much* a member of the community, as to forget that he is a man? Or does sound policy require, that the celestial Justice should be transform'd into an infernal Fury, and employ'd, in a Christian country, in torturing malefactors by arts and inventions, which are truly diabolical? For tho' men may forfeit their claim to the benefits of society, and by infringing its laws, may cease to be a part of the community; yet never can they forfeit all pretensions to pity and benevolence, because they can never cease to be a part of the human species. Besides, no end whatever can warrant the use of absurd, or unnatural means; and such must the punishments in question for ever be believ'd, unless it can be shown, that they have at least as much efficacy to prevent crimes, as they certainly have to extinguish humanity.

As errors and corruptions in religion and government may account for these instances of national cruelty, so those of education may generate in particulars the same

same barbarous spirit. But supposing such tempers could *not* be accounted for, yet who would argue from the natural, or acquir'd hardness and insensibility of a few miscreants, to the temper and texture of the whole species? A Nero, or a Caligula, are in reality not the rule of nature, but the exception to it. We can as little judge from *them* of what was intended in the kind; as from a Messalina, or any other anomalous character of the same cast, of what was intended in the sex. In spite of any such instances, which were they more common, would be less notic'd, the veriest caviller must admit, unless he is stout enough to combat conviction, that Benevolence and Pity are qualities as proper to the whole species, as Modesty and Chastity are peculiar to the one half of it.

'Tis true the history and aspect of the world seems but ill to accord with this favourable character of its chief inhabitants: among whom there are abundantly more instances of corruption and misery, than of innocence and happiness. But notwithstanding these untoward appearances, which arise from the very nature of liberty and virtue, an exact and thorough enquiry into the formation of the human mind would convince every unprejudiced person, that all those qualities, which are truly original and inherent, are beneficial and salutary; and that such as are of a contrary tendency, are adventitious and accidental. Much, you will say, it signifies to the poor sufferers, whether the authors of their misery ow'd their cruel dispositions to nature, to art,

art, or to accident. — More than at first sight may be imagin'd. Is it not of infinite consequence to the world, and ought it not to be matter of some comfort to *them*, that, from the very constitution of the human mind, Cruelty is inconsistent with its peace and tranquility, and in some degree must ever carry with it its own punishment? — that Pity, on the other hand, is as duly attended with that self-approbation, and consciousness of desert, which proves it to be the genuine and uniform tendency of pure, uncorrupted nature? For tho', for more reasons than may be known to us, 'tis not inconsistent with God's natural government of the world to permit one man to be the author or instrument of another's misery; yet every act by which innocence is injur'd, being done in open opposition to his will, as moral governour, and in direct violation of that law which he hath written on the hearts of his creatures; — it surely is a matter of the utmost importance, that every such act, while it exposes the doer to his vengeance, places the sufferer under his more immediate patronage and protection. And this it must do, from the very nature of God, and his essential attributes. For to doubt of his Compassion, of which every man carries within his own breast the most evident proofs, would be just as consistent with reason and common sense, as to doubt of his power and intelligence, of which the universe contains such numberless and undeniable instances. When he was pleas'd to fix us in this place of trial, to render it the more supportable, he gave men social and benevolent affections. And when

when he is pleased to admonish them by the mouth of his inspir'd Apostle to be pitiful, or compassionate, 'tis only referring 'em to their own sense and apprehension; to those very feelings with which he has impress'd, to those very faculties with which he has endow'd, them. But since every age and country has produced monsters in a human form, who have stifled those feelings, and abused those faculties to the injury and ruin of their fellow-creatures; such an authoritative and direct declaration of his Will in this important particular, was highly needful to invigorate the feeble efforts of nature and reason. As it must have been the object of every good man's wish, so it was a fresh instance of that transcendent Pity, which had a condemn'd world for its noble object. In consequence of this declaration, those ruthless and atrocious maxims so commonly practis'd heretofore by nations at war with each other, are now scarce ever heard of. Much less do we hear of infants, openly devoted to destruction by their own parents, sometimes from the blind impulse of superstition, oftener from the mercenary motives of convenience, or the foolish prepossessions of fancy: — of men, the daring, deliberate, remorseless contrivers of their own destruction, on almost any occasion of disappointment, or subject of distaste: — of * slaves and depend-

* Among the Greeks and Romans the right of punishment being lodged in the hands of private persons, the only measure of the injury or offence, was, the resentment of the party injur'd or offended. Nothing can be more destructive of humanity and tenderness, than the unlimited indulgence of

dependents without number, whose limbs and lives were no longer sound or safe, than their good luck, or happy genius should enable them to hit the taste and gratify the humour of sottish or tyrannical masters; — of states, the most renown'd for their wise laws and excellent institutions, who plac'd their highest entertainment and diversion in seeing the blood of their own citizens wantonly spilt upon public stages, and the most valuable lives frequently sacrific'd to their criminal curiosity. Notwithstanding the subtle arts which have been used by the fond admirers of antiquity to palliate and gloss over these glaring instances of cruelty, by which its fairest and brightest periods are thus sadly sullied and obscured; men of plain understandings will easily collect from them the state of humanity before the Gospel, and the wonderful improvements this principle has received in consequence of its publication.

Upon the whole, that the natural obligations to Pity are exceedingly strengthened by Revelation; and that the direct proofs of Revelation derive additional force and clearness from this implanted Affection; that the human Mind is form'd for those excellent purposes which the Gospel aims at; that, when separately view'd, both have the marks of divine workmanship so

of such a passion. What then can we think of laws, which not only overlook'd and permitted, but approved and authorized its utmost irregularities and excesses? Among the numberless benefits we owe to Christianity, this is one, that the exorbitant demands of private resentment are now moderated by the impartial decrees of public justice.

strong

strong upon them ; and that, when compar'd together, each carries this appearance still stronger, by its perfect conformity, and exact agreement with the other ; — by that light which it lends, by that testimony which it bears to it ; — these are truths as certain, as they are satisfactory.

From the foregoing observations it is evident, that the end and office of Pity is, to lessen the miseries of life. And from the following it will be found, that the end and office of Courtesy is, to lessen the inconveniences of society.

It is easy to imagine the numberless competitions and interferences which must needs arise among persons assembled and united for their mutual defence and security ; and, for the sake of order and tranquillity, consenting to be governed by the same laws. These indeed may regulate and decide the more momentous controversies about right and property ; but in those which relate to mere pleasure and convenience, less important indeed, but often not less violent than the other, every man must be left to his own feelings, and govern'd by his own discretion. 'Tis true that certain rules or modes of behaviour have been invented and approv'd, with a view to obviate the very inconveniences of which we are now speaking. But in the first place, these rules must often be ineffectual, from their having no penalties to guard, or sanctions to enforce them. All men have not a sense of

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shame, and meannesses any may commit with impunity. In the next place, highly useful as they are within their sphere of operation, they can be of no use any farther than they extend; and they must, from the very nature of 'em, be chiefly confin'd to those who are rais'd above the common level, and act in the higher characters. Politeness is, at best, but the virtue of a few; and is often but a borrow'd quality, to nothing more unlike and opposite, than to natural Civility.

But Courtesy, even in its best acceptation, if consider'd as a mere Civil accomplishment, or artificial excellence, is no part of our present enquiry. What the Apostle means, and what the original word imports, is a quality common to all mankind; a pure sentiment of nature, improv'd into a moral, and Christian principle: — A desire to please, and a disposition to be pleas'd with, not only those, who may happen to be of our own colour or persuasion, but with whom we have any intercourse, commerce, or connexion: — A desire, which has not the least affinity, which disclaims all kindred, with that selfish and servile spirit of complaisance, or that practis'd and insipid complaisance, which constitute the whole of good-nature with some persons: and which differs as widely from that passive approbation, that vague and indiscriminate assent, which passes with others for the whole of good manners.

As indifference is an affection of the mind plac'd, as
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it were, in the middle point between friendship and enmity, so this of Courtesy seems to hold the middle place between indifference and friendship; being neither capable of those languors and negligences, which belong to the first; nor subject to those strong and noted preferences, which are included in the last. The object of it is the ease and comfort of all that come within the reach of its influence. I know it is usually supposed that the social virtues may all be refer'd to benevolence, and are included under it. But this notion, however generally it may have been receiv'd, is hardly consistent either with reason or experience. For surely a man may be very friendly, and very benevolent, without being courteous; a natural shyness, and a rooted reserve being often blended with those best of qualities. But shyness and reserve, however temper'd and alleviated by a latent humanity, will still differ from Courtesy, as much as they do from a latent pride, of which they are often most injuriously suspected.

It may be difficult to give a complete description of this truly amiable and social affection. When fully unfolded and develop'd, it should seem to include the following particulars,

“An habitual attention to such qualities in other men, as are any way amiable, or praise-worthy, with an endeavour to make them appear to the best advantage: a readiness to excuse or alleviate their defects, join'd with

a happy or judicious manner of disguising its own superiority, and of declining the honour which is due to it."

'Tis true that to possess the quality in this its highest stage of improvement, not only a good education, and great talents are presuppos'd, but likewise some natural delicacy of taste and sentiment. However, if all are not capable of pleasing alike, all are alike capable of desiring to please: so that any defect as to the power, may be amply made up by the evidence and force of the inclination: an inclination, which when it is honest, and sincere, must ever carry with it the strongest merit, and the surest success. It extorts even from the worst of men what little love and esteem they are capable of conceiving; and almost disarms their hatred, when it is most furious. It removes or abates that envy and jealousy, which are usually provok'd by superiority, or eminence of almost every kind. It renders the want of such advantages less sensible by securing the avenues to esteem. It softens the severity of Reason, and corrects the exorbitancy of Self-love. But these effects of it deserve to be particularly examin'd, and must therefore be reserv'd for some future occasion. At present it is sufficient to add, that if there was no other reason for cultivating that lovely temper, which delights in ministering to the satisfaction of all about us; the necessity of it to our own happiness should be an argument, which nothing can resist. For without this spirit, tho' a man were as wise and as virtuous as Solomon or Socrates;

Socrates ; nay, tho' all the great personal qualities both of body and mind, which were ever shar'd among the most illustrious of the sons of men, were met and centred in him alone ; — yet without Courtesy, he could never please ; without pleasing, he could never be belov'd ; and without being belov'd, he could never be happy.



I P E T E R iii. 8. last part.

be pitiful, be courteous.

Notwithstanding all the advantages of a studious and sequester'd life, it is far from being favourable either to Pity or Courtesy.

Where there are scarce any calamitous accidents to agitate the mind, or any objects of distress to attack the heart, the tender affections can have little or no exercise. This is not the least of those bad effects which are owing to the happiest circumstance of our happy situation. Nor will it be found at all more favourable to Courtesy, than it is to Compassion. That spirit of emulation so serviceable to the growth of Learning, strikes at the very root of Civility: a spirit, which, for the sake of its advantages, deserves to be cherish'd, but, on account of its mischiefs, demands to be restrain'd.

This will be seen more clearly, as we proceed to consider the uses of Courtesy under the two views of its
Softening

Softening the severity of Reason,
And

Correcting the exorbitancy of Self-love.

Whoever considers the temper and character of Reason, when it has long been intent on grave and important subjects, on deep researches, or abstruse speculations, will find it to be that of reserve and austerity. Some degree of these qualities are observable in all studious and contemplative men; and in many they prevail in so great a degree, as almost to alienate and estrange them from their own species. In that deep retirement which is chosen for the purposes of study, 'tis common to contract an unsociable humour, which never can be worn off; a rusticity and roughness, which no after-polish can get the better of. Never indeed can the usefulness and importance of the severer Studies be render'd problematical by any abuses, or defects to which they may be liable, so long as it is possible to guard against them. But without some attention to this point, all that is gain'd on the side of reason, will probably be lost on that of sentiment. Yet whoever should reflect how much our own happiness and that of others depends on the due cultivation of this latter principle, would see little cause to triumph in any intellectual acquisitions which are made at the expence of it. Much less if he farther reflected, that right affections, tho' they should chance to be exerted in the pursuance of mistaken notions, may be very meritorious: whereas the justest notions without

out correspondent affections, can never make him one jot the better. Far from these Mansions sacred to Science, for ever far be that Cynical and contemptuous spirit, which delights in discovering and exposing defects and blemishes! Farther still be that wanton and mischievous passion for satyr and ridicule, which never entertains one part of society, but at the expence of another! But farthest of all be that polemic pride, which combats, not with a view of conviction, but of conquest; and triumphs, *but* to insult! Wherever Learning takes this dangerous direction, the want of it would have been a blessing. But it must be confess'd, and ought to be lamented, that, without the least tincture of these odious qualities, nay, with many useful and excellent endowments, 'tis common for persons to be highly unacceptable merely from the want of that courteous, and obliging behaviour, which alone can give them their true value. 'Tis the strange destiny of such persons to be admir'd, respected, and — *shunn'd*! — admir'd and respected, for their great proficiency in virtue and learning; and shunn'd, for their perfect ignorance, or wilful neglect, of those little regards and attentions, which as long as men have any remains of sensibility, nothing can dispense with. 'Twould be wrong to indulge the least suspicion that there is any natural enmity betwixt the Sciences and the Graces. The possibility of their entire union and harmony is out of all question. But still it will often happen, that the very talents which enable men to shine in solitude, shall

hinder them from pleasing in society. That love of truth and accuracy, which guided them with so much success in their philosophical enquiries, by teaching them to distrust their own conceptions; may greatly mislead them in their social intercourse, where too little deference to the unimportant, or even erroneous opinions of others, would be highly prejudicial. Much accusom'd to reading and thinking, they are apt to examine the conduct and principles of those with whom they live and converse, with the same scrupulous and severe impartiality that history surveys the lives and actions of men in past ages. Those lofty ideas of moral perfection with which their minds were early possess'd, are apt also to breed in them a want of indulgence for every thing, which appears to fall short of it. Hence, even the honest indignation against vice, and the just contempt of folly, when nourish'd and fed by reflection, will often grow intemperate, and sometimes terminate in spleen and misanthropy. Hence that passionate and ill-tim'd regard for reason and justice, which refuses to yield to the necessity of seeing men imperfect, and of making those equitable allowances, which, after all, the best and the wisest could ill do without. But say that any were exempt from failings, still they would be under the same obligations to Courtesy, because if they have any desire to be serviceable, they must submit to be agreeable; and 'tis impossible they should ever be so, (unless from some strange peculiarity of character) without complying with those rules and modes of behaviour,

behaviour, which custom and common consent have adopted.

The truth is, that without the assistance of Courtesy, Wisdom contracts such a formidable mien, and Virtue carries such a hostile appearance; that by the generality of men, who judge from appearances, what is most unlike *them*, will be thought most eligible. The ignorant and the vicious know how to improve the advantage, and draw over to their party, many who have no liking for their principles, by the skilful exertion of that familiar and attractive quality, which, as it never fails to brighten the best characters, so it serves to shadow and disguise the worst.

In concluding this article, let it here be noted; once for all, that as without the aid and concurrence of this Quality, Reason, however active in the pursuit of knowledge, can never be successful in the application of it; so neither can this Quality be trusted a moment longer than it is under the direction and controul of Reason. This single remark will spare us the trouble of recounting and excepting against the numberless base and spurious arts which are employ'd to please, and which can be no more an objection to the principle we contend for, than sophistry is to sound reasoning.

The great business of religion and philosophy is to inform the understanding, and to regulate the will.

But the last of these two points is the most difficult to be compass'd, from the undue prevalence of Self-love, and of particular passions. And there is always some danger, lest the very methods employ'd to restrain their impetuosity, should destroy their existence. 'Tis with the mind of man, as with some delicate piece of mechanism, whose deviations and irregularities none but a master-hand should presume to correct. Before therefore the selfish principles have had time to take root, it is necessary to cultivate with care and industry the contrary affections. 'Tis certain that the growth of those must be proportionably check'd and retarded, as these advance in strength and vigour. The zeal for truth and liberty, the sense of honour and dignity, the love of esteem, the social and sympathetic spirit; — all these qualities are as properly a part of our nature, as any of the inferiour appetites and passions. Yet so great and general is the prevalence of Self-love, that several Writers have resolv'd all human actions into the immediate, or remoter operation of this single principle. That such conclusions are hasty and erroneous, will indeed appear from applying them to the very Quality we are now considering. Courtesy, or the desire to please, as it shews the value we set on the good opinion of others, will entitle us to their favour: their favour may be useful to us in various ways, and must be agreeable to us on all accounts: but neither is that contingency, or this certainty the necessary ground of the desire, which often actuates the mind antecedent to reflection, and carries

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us, as it were, out of ourselves by its own native force and energy. And this shews how able it is to oppose the encroachments of that principle, which tho' a right tendency as consider'd in the kind, is yet almost always so very faulty, as consider'd in the degree. To correct its exorbitancy, and reduce it to its just measure, no Quality can be so proper, as that of Courtesy. Its constant attention to every art and method, which can be employ'd to render our own happiness consistent with that of others; and to conciliate these two objects whenever they happen to clash, or be at variance; — its readiness to strengthen and support benevolence when weaken'd or over-borne by the violence of interfering affections; — its carefulness to hinder those latent dislikes and antipathies, which are engender'd by an opposition of interests, or a difference of tempers, from breaking out into open and avow'd enmities; — its sollicitude to make up for the want of those essential services which few can perform, by those kind regards, which are in every one's disposal; — all these properties declare the nature of this Quality, and must convince us that the heart which harbours such a Guest, can never be possess'd by a mean and vicious Self-love. And from hence we may further discover, in what respects Courtesy agrees with Benevolence, and in what it varies from it. For as it is the peculiar excellence of the one, to study to serve men, tho' it cannot please them; so the other as generously delights in pleasing, tho' it cannot serve them.

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And now, may it not justly be matter of wonder, that of all the virtues belonging to the social class, this only should have been so little the subject of enquiry? The truth is, the frequent abuse of it among those, to whom it is indebted for nothing but its name, seems to have degraded it from its high rank as a moral excellence, and metamorphos'd it into a mere Civil accomplishment. Little notic'd, and less cultivated in any other view, it has rather been studied as an art, than cherish'd as a principle, tho' none can be more truly founded in nature, more approv'd by reason, or of higher use and value to society. For tho' it does not appear in any other passage of Scripture, but this single one of St. Peter, to be recommended under the form of an injunction, yet we have seen that, considered in its own nature, it has all the force of an obligation. In reality, what quality is there in the whole catalogue of natural excellences, the reasonableness and necessity of which is more apparent, or for the exercise of which there can be more frequent opportunities or occasions? Valour, generosity, clemency, virtues indeed of a higher lustre, can belong to a few only, whom Providence seems to have singled out from the mass of mankind, and destin'd to be the instruments of its great designs. But there is no character in life from which this virtue is excluded. 'Tis necessary to all, but especially to those, whose business it is to advise, or instruct. No one was more sensible of this truth, than the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

tiles. With all his learning and eloquence, he knew how vain it was to think of convincing the understandings of men deeply possess'd with prejudice and falsehood, without first securing an interest in their affections and good graces. This was the peculiar office of Courtesy ; and its effects in preparing the most untoward dispositions to receive the happy impressions of truth and religion, were never more strongly exemplified than in his instructions, and in those of his divine Master. To withstand the utmost force of evidence and conviction, a little perverseness might possibly suffice. But brutal and atrocious must be the temper of those, who could remain insensible to such winning and attractive graces, as attended the manifestations of divine power. When the tenderest regards were added to the most important services, and the desire of pleasing went along with the power of doing good ; Benevolence and Courtesy, like associates in command, each masterly and potent in itself, but stronger by its union with the other, acquir'd a sovereign sway over the heart and affections.

Such are the instruments which truth employs to establish her authority, and such is the nature of that dominion to which she aspires. Yet that Church, which pretends to be the only true one, instead of winning men over to its opinions by a " pitiful and courteous," forces its opinions upon *them* with a cruel and persecuting spirit. Were there nothing else to invalidate
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its pretensions, and discredit its Doctrines, this single deviation from the fundamental rule of Christianity, should be sufficient to drive from its communion every creature who will not submit to renounce his reason. To little purpose do we read the Scriptures, if we continue strangers to those amiable qualities, which are essential to the Christian character. To our great misfortune were we form'd for rational converse and social intercourse, if at the great day of enquiry we are found wanting in any of those offices, or regards, which are due from us to the meanest of our fellow creatures. On the contrary, an habitual attention to please those, who are not in a condition to make any returns; to merit their esteem and approbation; and to contribute to their happiness in the *least instances*, as well as in the greatest; this Quality, whatever be its name, is of such a nature, as will not only endear us to *them*, but to the beneficent Author of all happiness.

F I N I S.